The Work of a Village Education Association

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AN ADDRESS BY

D. C. HEATH

Prepared by request and read at the Conference of Education Associations at Newark, N. J. April, 1901

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Work of a Village Education Association[1]

N dealing with the subject assigned me I have found it extremely difficult to separate in thought the work of a village from that of a city education association. My experience with an education association has been in a city, but in a city made up of a dozen villages which combined constitute the seven wards of the city of Newton, Massachusetts. But while ours is a city association, it is doing its work largely by committees, these committees forming in effect as many village associations.

[1] An address delivered by request, at the Conference of Education Associations, Newark, N. J., April, 1901.

Under these circumstances I find myself in the position of the Wellesley girls of early days, when far less individual freedom was permitted the students than now, and when the maiden president was often embarrassed by her double position as magistrate of the community and mother of the daughters committed to her care. She was greatly troubled because the girls established the custom of going about to kiss one another good-night. She remonstrated with them in chapel, saying, "We are a village, and the people in a village do not go about ringing door bells and waking people up to kiss them good-night."

Soon after, the girls sent a formal petition to the president asking to be exempted from some hardship or other. Then the president arose in chapel, with tears of injured mother-love flowing down her cheeks, and said, "The idea of children presenting a formal petition to their

mother as if she were a tyrant to be feared! We are a family, and members of a family do not engross their petitions on parchment." At their next meeting the girls "*Resolved:* That we cannot make any real progress until we find out whether we are a family or a village."

Notwithstanding the programme calls for a paper on village associations, I find myself using the city side of my brain, and you may therefore find that much that I say is applicable alike to city and village associations.

I shall assume at the outset that you have started a Village Education Association because you fully realized: —

That the chief function of one generation is to put the next on the stage, and that your association will be an aid in fulfilling this most important duty;

That before you started it, you saw clearly its necessity, and understood just

the object for which it was to come into existence, otherwise you might fritter away a good deal of valuable time and do the cause more harm than good by discounting beforehand any future and better considered movement in behalf of the schools.

I hope that you have not formed it simply because it is the fashion, for in that event it will not live long and will accomplish little while it lives; and dying an early death, it will do harm by giving teachers and the public the impression that the schools and the educational community have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting.

I also assume that in forming your association you have not aimed to add another to the thousand excellent education associations already in existence, conducted by teachers and professional educators. It would be useless for us parents to try to reveal to the world a new theory

and practice of education. This is best done by the experts who have had their local and national associations from early times, and who are better able than are we to discover what is the science, and what should be the art, of education.

I also assume that you have not set yourselves up as censors of the teachers or of the school authorities, or even given the community the impression that you know more about schools than they do.

That you have not announced your intention to reform the schools. They may need it, — they may not. In most cases this remains to be found out later; but whether they need reforming or not, you have probably not forgotten that an association that undertakes to reform everything will not be likely to reform anything, but will in the end need reforming itself most of all.

I assume that you are moving cautiously

and not intentionally trespassing upon anybody's prerogatives, or, as some one has well phrased it, "you are practicing a conservative radicalism through a radical conservatism."

That you are assuming at the outset that the teachers and school officers are as good as can be had, or at least as good as you deserve. If they are not, that will appear in due time as a result of the legitimate work of your association.

May I not also infer that you found that you needed an association to aid you in finding out just what is being done in your schools, or, as the Brookline association has well put it, "to interpret the schools to their patrons?" For in these days parents rarely visit the schools and teachers no longer have the time or opportunity to visit the parents. Should the parents visit the schools I think they would find the superintendent, the teach-

ers, and the school committee much more efficient than the average citizen realizes, and probably would find the heating, the lighting, the ventilation, and other sanitary arrangements much poorer than they had suspected.

Perhaps you had a still better reason for forming your association, namely, to find out your full duty as parents, and through the association to gain help in doing that duty.

If you have found that yours is primarily a parents' rather than a teachers' association, that it is a home as well as a school association, you have probably decided, as I have, that our organizations should be called Home and School Associations and not Education Associations, which in one sense they are not, and which in any sense is liable to be wrongly understood.

If you have found yourselves and your duty you have doubtless begun to cast the

beam out of your own eye and to see more clearly how to cast the mote out of the eye of your brother superintendent, school-committee-man, and teacher.

Having advanced thus far, you have doubtless learned that one of the chief functions of such a body is to create public sentiment and to arouse public spirit, for with the right quality and quantity of public spirit your labor is not in vain. And do not forget that, as Mr. Howells says, "You have no right to expect public spirit from anybody but the public."

You will therefore lay plans to interest the public as early and as fully as possible in your work, for it is the public that pays the taxes, and it is the taxes that help to do in our schools what superintendent, school board, and teachers may have long desired to do but cannot accomplish without the proper appropriations. When the people are thoroughly aroused almost

anything can be done that it is desirable to do with and in the schools.

The people should be interested, because they own the schools; while the teachers are employed to give their best thought, time, and strength to serving the owners. It is therefore for the taxpayers to say whether the schools are the best they are willing to have or are capable of making. It is for the education associations to gracefully and skillfully bring home to the taxpayer such information concerning the schools and concerning his duty toward them as will cause him to will to do that duty.

Having thus formed your association with intelligent purpose you will be anxious to learn next just what machinery you need and how best to keep it going without friction and with the most desirable results. Therefore I may be pardoned some suggestions based on experience,

for what has once been done can usually be done again.

First, divide the whole membership into committees, each of which will take the responsibility of investigating and discussing the special work assigned to it or chosen by it. This makes every member an active member. Select a good, wide-awake, intelligent chairman for each committee, and throw on him the responsibility of keeping his committee busy.

The committees may be made up according to the members' interests, and yet I think that in large villages or cities the members living in a given neighborhood or ward should make one committee, those in another section another committee and so on. The members of a committee will then know one another, and the parlor meetings (for I advise these) can be conveniently attended.

It is a good plan for each committee to

send notices of its meetings to the whole association, in order that other members interested in the special topic to be discussed may be present if they so desire. Besides, by this plan other committees are spurred to better work, or more frequent meetings, when they thus discover that they may be falling behind.

When a committee having some special subject in charge is ready to report, a meeting of the whole association may be called to hear and discuss the report, and the talking will be at a definite mark and progress will be made.

In this connection it is worth while to suggest that it is better that speakers from abroad should be engaged to talk, not on general educational subjects, but on the special topics, or one of the special topics which the association has under consideration, or on a topic that will help to solve some local problem.

By concentrating our whole attention on the subjects of daily medical inspection of schools and the providing of playgrounds for the children, and by securing speakers who have discussed these special topics, we have the unanimous vote of the Board of Health and the unanimous vote of the school committee of Newton for daily medical inspection, and we are now expecting the Board of Aldermen to make the small appropriation which the Board of Health asks for this purpose.

We have also secured a playground of several acres, centrally located, for the use of three wards, the city appropriating one half the money for it and the citizens raising the other half by subscription.

Teachers should be welcomed as members, not so much with a view to helping or criticising them as to get their point of view on all questions, and that they may set the association right as to the

conditions which actually exist in the schools.

Teachers ought to welcome, and I think they will welcome, such an opportunity to get their views and needs before the people.

A few days ago I asked the superintendent of schools of a small village that has an education association, what he had to say in favor of such associations, and he replied, "There are three directions in which our association has done good, and only three. First, it has kept an intelligent class of people interested in the schools; second, it has given the cranks an opportunity to discover that they are cranks, and third, it has established a medium through which teachers can get certain matters before the people without volunteering information, which they will never do."

Having a fair number of teachers and about one fourth of the school board as

members of our Newton Association, we have hit upon the happy plan of making them a special committee on reforms within the schools; in other words, we have set the school people to reforming themselves, a much more agreeable way for them and for us.

The discussion of questions in the association suggests to the school people what reforms they may well undertake. The looking-glass can be held up to them in such a way that they discover their blemishes without having them pointed out specifically, and the school board man will get point after point, and will straightway take many of them to his board, and before you are aware of it, he will have some of your suggested reforms well under way.

At one of our meetings last year we had under discussion the *possible* not to say *probable* but unknown defects in children's

sight and hearing. A school board member came to me after the meeting and said, "Why should we not test the sight and hearing of the children in our Newton schools?" Of course I replied that we should, and that the numerous oculists in the city would help to make the test an inexpensive one. He early brought the matter to the attention of the board, and an appropriation was made to try the plan in a few schools as an experiment. I feel tolerably sure that this test will lead to the examination of the eyes, if not the ears, of our whole school population.

It is also a good thing to have some member of the school board explain to you periodically the new things contemplated or under way in the school board. The help in such cases is mutual.

It has been suggested that we should have the candidates for the school board, or their friends, appear at one of our meet-

ings and give such information about the proposed new members as would help our association to vote intelligently, but we imperatively refuse to entangle the association in politics in any way. We have been asked to make an effort to get women on the school board, and to take sides in other matters which political parties are interested to accomplish, but we have invariably refused, because we do not believe that politics should have anything whatever to do with the schools, and because we feel that the moment we take sides in politics our association will be doomed.

It is a good thing to have a social half hour at the beginning of each meeting to promote acquaintance between members and between parents and teachers. It will be found also that some members will express their opinions in this social half hour who would not do so in the formal meeting.

I am inclined to think, too, that a query box would help to stir up interest. Certain parents or teachers may wish the association to discuss some question which they would not like to bring up in the open meeting, or with which they would not wish their names connected, and such questions can go into the query box.

Again, many members will be too timid to speak, as I have suggested, and this plan would afford them an opportunity to give their views to the association and get the views of the association in return without speaking; or if a parent is inclined to complain of some feature of the school work, but for some reason does not wish to take the matter to the teacher or superintendent, he can in this way bring it before the association, have it discussed by the teachers, the superintendent, and others, and thus get a solution of his problem without making it personal.

Having your machinery thus well adjusted, and having learned how to run it, you should set it at work on the thing or the things you most need locally and are most likely to accomplish, for accomplishing something will encourage and strengthen you and will make you seem of some worth to the community. "Nothing succeeds like success."

But I must hasten to some of the specific things which an education association can undertake to create public sentiment, and can do after that sentiment has been aroused; and I speak first of what seems to me the larger work of our own association. It covers that portion of the child's life for which the parents are chiefly responsible. Even with two sessions a day the child is in school but five hours out of the twenty-four (or five out of the sixteen waking hours), and this for only nine out of the twelve months of the year. For

the out-of-school portion, or far the greater portion, of the child's life the parent must be responsible, but in the majority of cases, and for the larger part of this time, nobody seems to have much care, and yet it is a period fraught with manifold dangers and possibilities.

The opportunities here for character forming cannot be overvalued. Our association is therefore giving special attention to the out-of-school life, and such things connected with schools as seem to be more in our province than in that of the school officials, and about which school officials can do little, if anything.

The thing that a parent is most solicitous about when he sends his child to school is the health of that child. He knows that without health all effort is comparatively futile, and that with good health other desirable things are likely to come in good time. Therefore the hygienic conditions

under which the child is placed at school are of the greatest importance, and yet forty-nine out of fifty parents never seek to discover just what those conditions are.

We parents place great stress upon wholesome living. We build our houses so that we may have good ventilation, sunshine, good drainage, freedom from dust, and with every condition and appliance necessary to keep our children in perfect physical condition; and then for nine months of the year send them to school where they are given over to other conditions with which we do not even familiarize ourselves, and which may or may not be as good as the home conditions, but which should be as good or better in respect to cleanliness, wholesomeness, attractiveness, and refinement of living. In fact hygienically the poorest schoolhouse in a village should be as good as our best dwelling house.

It seems to me, therefore, that first, last, and everywhere, the health of the children and the sanitary condition of the schoolhouse, cellar, yard, and surrounding property, should have our attention.

If the site chosen for your school be the best in town instead of the cheapest; if the building stand on a sandy or gravelly soil easily drained; if the slope of the land in the vicinity insure perfect and proper drainage of the school yard; if air, light, and sunshine have free access to the building all the year round; if the supply of water be inexhaustible and its purity absolutely above suspicion — then you represent an exceptional community and are entitled to our heartiest congratulations.

In Belgium, Germany, Austria, and other foreign countries, sites for schoolhouses cannot be selected until approved by a bureau of hygiene or a physician appointed for that purpose.

A Village Education Association

Every village in America should have at least one sanitary inspector of schools, and the village education association ought to gain the assent of the people to an inspector who would visit the school buildings at least once a month; and it is best that that visit should not be made on any regular day, otherwise the inspector may not see things as they actually exist.

We insist on sanitary conditions in the cow barns from which our milk supply comes. Can we do less in reference to the buildings where our children congregate for five or six hours a day?

Unfortunately, most sanitary inspection made at present does not take place until the unsanitary conditions exist, and often not until the conditions reveal themselves in diphtheria or typhoid or scarlet fever.

Statistics show that the death rate among school children in America is higher than in Europe, and presumably because we

have paid less attention to the proper hygiene of our school buildings.

If you cannot obtain such sanitary inspection as I have suggested, could not a committee from your association furnish a report twice a year on the sanitary condition of the schoolhouses? Might not circulars be issued by the Board of Health, or, if you have none, by the association, which in the hands of parents and teachers would go far to promote health and prevent disease among the young, ignorant, or careless?

Do not cease to challenge the water supply of your country and village schools. Even in a city the providing of a simple and inexpensive water filter may in itself justify the existence of an education association, if it does nothing else.

The toilet rooms of a schoolhouse need constant and careful attention, and it should be borne in mind that better than

occasional disinfectants are constant cleanliness and good ventilation.

Have you ever inquired when and how the school buildings are cleaned and how often the floors are washed? Would you be surprised to learn that the windows and floors are washed only once a year — in the long vacation before the opening of school?

In the city of Boston a few years ago, during a careful study of the sanitary conditions of our schools, it was learned that the floors of seventy-seven of the buildings had never been washed since they were laid, and therefore it is not surprising to learn that consumption (a disease known to be caused largely by dust) has been far more prevalent among Boston teachers than among those of foreign cities where the floors are much more frequently washed.

While you are waiting to secure the appointment of a sanitary inspector you can

do a great deal to create a public sentiment which will demand and secure the thorough cleansing of floors, desks, walls, woodwork, and windows, and can see that all stagnant water is run off from the pipes or pump, and that all drinking-cups are disinfected.

And bad ventilation, too, is worth looking after. Expert opinion as to the effects of bad air is to be found. It has been discovered that the work of children falls off forty per cent in badly ventilated buildings. Cannot an association give this important matter the attention which the school committee will not or cannot, and deal with it in so skillful and politic a way as not to offend anybody, and receive the hearty thanks, not to say the financial aid, of the fathers and mothers?

An exit for impure air, and pure air supplied not at intervals but constantly and

without a draft, is a desideratum in most of our school buildings, even in the comparatively modern ones.

Examinations of the eyes of quite a quarter of a million of school children have been made at various times and places in this country, and by painstaking inspectors, and it has been clearly demonstrated that not only does defective vision exist in a large percentage of them, but that visual defects are constantly increasing.

A village association may easily test this matter with the permission of the school committee, which ought readily to be had, and it can also discover whether school buildings poorly lighted cannot be improved in this respect, and have an eye on buildings being erected and suggest ample light from the left of the desk.

Speaking of desks, I am reminded that

when I was a village schoolmaster I discovered that the seats were such that the small pupils could not sit erect and in a comfortable posture with the feet resting firmly on the floor. The feet could not touch the floor except by contortions of the body which foretold deformity in growing children. Think of sitting on such seats for two or three hours at a time, when we adults find it hard to sit in a cushioned pew for an hour!

Let me revert again to the eyes of the children long enough to say that I have often seen blackboards and maps placed between two windows, toward which the child must turn suddenly, and at which he must often look for a long time. This in itself is enough to ruin the normal sight of a growing child.

And can you think of anything more important than daily medical inspection of

the schools to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and to save lives and health and even money by obviating the necessity of closing the schools for long periods? I cannot, and therefore this is the first thing our association has taken up, and with satisfactory results.

Of course this is a thing more needed and perhaps more easily managed in cities than in villages, and yet I do not see why a village should not delegate to one, or some, of its physicians the duty of calling at the school building in the morning for the purpose of examining any children that the teacher thinks may be coming down with some disease which is likely to be communicated to the rest of the children. It takes but a few minutes of the doctor's time, and therefore the cost is very slight.

It is surprising to me, as it doubtless is to you, that this very important matter has

not received earlier and more attention. I was surprised to learn at the late meeting of the superintendents of schools of the country that it has only just come before them for consideration, and yet they all declare that it is the most important thing that the association can consider.

Perhaps this function of medical inspector, and that of the sanitary inspector already mentioned, could be combined in one person, provided that person were a physician in good standing.

If an association cannot do anything better at first in this direction it can put up some "Do" and "Don't" cards adapted to the season and placed in each room, to enforce elementary lessons of hygiene and health.

Home study is now receiving a good deal of attention among us, with the result that most thoughtful parents and some

teachers feel that under the age of fourteen it should be discouraged and in some cases forbidden. It is exceedingly important that parents and pupils, and teachers for that matter, should not forget that three hours of good, earnest work are better for instruction and for discipline than five hours of indifferent, listless loafing with one's book.

The question of children's entertainments, both in kind and amount, is another matter that has troubled parents, and over which they, rather than the schools, should have control. Children quote one another in their wish to have this, that, or the other kind of entertainment, and as strength is dissipated and possibly health destroyed by unseasonable and otherwise wrong practices in this direction, why should not the people of a village get together and talk over what would be a

reasonable position for the neighborhood to take in such things? or in other words, why should not the parents agree upon certain evenings of the week when such entertainments may be had, and even go so far as to help provide these entertainments, and thus have an oversight over the young men and women which is not now practiced? The teachers would join in helping regulate the matter, for they feel that much ill health which is charged to overstudy in the schools is due rather to unseasonable hours at parties.

Again, the entertainment of children in school is an important matter, and an education association should get the local lawyer to give a simple talk to children on common law or the duties and functions of citizenship; the architect could tell them about his work; the banker could give a talk that would start not a few young men on the way to saving and suc-

cess; the manufacturer could give interesting accounts of his factory and production, and so on through the catalogue of professions and occupations. You have never asked them to do it, nor have we, but why should we not?

Another subject which naturally interests the parent more than the teacher is that of morals and manners. The six secular days of the week are the laboratories in which right and wrong actions are actually seen, and they can be analyzed and commented on at a time when it is natural to infer the moral lesson, and when the ethical bearing of the child's conduct may easily and naturally be brought to his attention.

Are teachers doing as much in this direction as the parents wish? In most cases I think they are not; but it is a topic on which parents can confer through an edu-

cation association, and later by conference with the teachers can agree upon a code which might and should be followed.

I think that much more can be done in the schools in the way of direct teaching of morals and manners, but teachers have to be careful about both, as they feel that they may offend the parents.

As a nation our children are sadly lacking in good manners, and I am wondering if it would be in every way a sin and a misfortune to have in the schools a small manual containing precepts for good behavior and for politeness. Every pupil should be taught the code of the more refined circles of society. In the hotel, at the dinner party, or in the public conveyance, everybody meets everybody, and has frequent occasions for understanding and practicing the precepts of conventional good breeding.

Since the pupil is likely to take instruc-

tion in these things with more authority as coming from his teacher, it seems to me that the parents should let the teacher know how far they would like her to go in these matters.

Children's reading out of school is another matter for a parent to manage. The reading in school is probably good enough.

Can you think of a more potent and wholesome influence on the mental and moral and even physical make-up of your boy and girl than good books, and can you think of a more disintegrating influence on mind, morals, and physical health than weak and pernicious books?

I count this matter of children's literature most important because the most neglected of anything that our special committees are called upon to consider.

Books and papers are after all to be the chief educators in after life. Here at least

the children pursue an elective course. To teach them to choose wisely these silent masters who are to mould their lives is one of the best services we can render them. For lack of such help they patronize that host of demoralizing teachers who await them on the news-stands and who corrupt their minds by sensational tales or tainted novels.

In nothing is a guiding hand more needed than in the friendship of books; and if the coöperation of parents be secured, the present ravenous consumption of low literature will be checked and a better taste formed. There is no preventive of a bad taste like the acquisition of a good one.

Might it not be well to appoint a committee to make up a list of books such as can be recommended for children's reading? The teachers, and the librarian if you have one, would be glad to help,

and those who read books before they are put into the Sunday-school libraries, and the women's clubs and others can help.

This reminds me that an association can do effective work to secure a good local library, if you do not have one, and in any event for a good school library. People will often give books, or money to buy books, and publishers furnish now an excellent list of good books for such a purpose at a very low cost.

If you have a public library which has no children's department, one should be started. You know without my narrating it, how much is being done all over the country in the way of correlating the public library with the school.

Members of village associations should also see to it that the children participate in the benefits of any traveling library schemes which may be in operation in the near-by larger towns.

In this connection much may be learned from what is being done in the public libraries of Boston, Hartford, Chicago, etc. These libraries also issue lists of suitable books for children which can be followed with absolute safety.

The association might also bring influence to bear upon the local newsdealer to prevent the circulation of harmful trash among the young people.

Book clubs may be formed, by which twenty people, for example, each buy one book and thereby gain the privilege of reading twenty books. The twenty books may be deposited in the small libraries when another twenty are bought, and begin their cheerful round, and a library may thus be built up.

We do not stop to realize that for more than half of the child's waking hours he is "on the road," so to speak, between school

and home. Neither the home nor the school is fully responsible for him, or at least they are not fully looking after him.

This is a very important time of a child's life. This is the time when he is being influenced for good or bad by his playmates, who often, sad to say, have more influence with him than have his parents. Many a life has been made or marred between school and home, but whose business is it to look after the child during this period? The school claims that it cannot and should not, and the parent does not, but should, and therefore I believe that one of the most important things a parents' association may do is to provide playgrounds and games as well, and oversight of those games, that parents may know that their children are being safely employed. Therefore a committee looking after this subject could do much good.

Villages do not need playgrounds as much as cities, and yet villages should have playgrounds that belong to the village rather than to individuals. Playgrounds are in my judgment more important to the future welfare of the village than parks, franchises for street railways, or the location of tax-paying buildings.

If you already have playgrounds they are very likely not fitted with apparatus, and portions may not be set off for the smaller children ; or if that be the case, you certainly have not some one appointed, perhaps a high school boy (if there be a high school) to teach the children games and to act as umpire and see that there is no unseemly conduct.

I believe strongly in play and its good effects, but in intelligent rather than aimless play, and therefore I advise that education associations should give it much more attention than it has ever had.

Play has a moral and intellectual as well as a physical value. You must have noticed that men having great capacity for play have also great capacity for work, and I believe more strongly than most of you probably do that the college boy who has judiciously engaged in some form of athletics is likely to do better mental work than the boy who has not; and the value of play is heightened when it calls forth the fundamental forms of human activity such as are used by the race in constructing, overcoming difficulties, attacking, defending, coöperating, and all the social arts that have occupied mankind for ages. Formal gymnastics will not so well produce manliness, energy, courage, fairness, endurance and a proper knowledge of how to take defeats.

If the teacher will overlook or join in the games, he will find it a harvest field, if he desires to know the children as they really

are, for on the playground the child is not under restraints and acts his real self.

Most small villages and many large ones have no superintendent of schools, and the children in many villages must leave home to prepare for college. A village education association can get the villages and country school districts along electric car lines to unite in one good high school and combine to employ a superintendent.

Then, too, the ladies in the association who know the advantages of the Kindergarten can induce the parents of the little children to join in a petition to establish a kindergarten when the school authorities are not likely to because of the expense and because there is no demand. With the young children taken care of in the kindergarten and primary school, neighborhoods could combine and centralize

grammar school pupils and have a strong union school instead of several weak, unclassified district schools.

Evening schools have never been in vogue in villages, but why should they not? Many country boys have to work all summer, and attend only the winter school, and many village children who have short terms of school and few wholesome diversions outside the home in the evening, might profit much by the right kind of evening school.

Manual Training is another factor in education which the country child has after his own plan at home. It would be better for him to learn the use of tools by a logical method which would develop the brain through the systematic training of the hand, the eye, the judgment, the taste, and the conscience. We have known in-

stances where a ladies' club started vacation schools in manual training for boys and in cooking for girls, and after a time induced the school committee to make these subjects an organic part of the school work, contributing the tools and appliances on hand toward starting the new department.

The social service committee of the association can help ambitious boys and girls in countless ways to make a place in the world for themselves by securing, for example, an apprenticeship, by finding a way to earn money with which to go to college, or to study art or music or engineering, or anything worthy the ambition of American youth.

In sections rich in historic treasure the association can serve the schools, and adults too, by collecting articles and re-

cording and preserving historic data before the people who know whereof they speak pass off the stage. In time, memorial tablets, if merely of wood, can be put up to mark historic spots, and not only add interest to the neighborhood, but greatly increase in the minds of children an honorable pride in the town in which they live.

One very interesting and instructive thing is to prepare a loan exhibition of relics and curios, of books and of pictures which are works of art. The old town itself will be surprised to know what treasures are contained in its own homes. The small admission fee charged can be applied to the purchase of a new set of slides for the lantern, or new books for the library.

The association can hire a lantern and slides, and even a lecturer, and thus interest pupils in life outside of their own little community. They will want to pay a small admission to the second lecture,

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and so raise money to buy a lantern and slides. In many cities slides on various subjects are now loaned by the public libraries, and neighboring villages could exchange slides and thus save expense.

School furnishing and decoration is a matter largely dependent on the parent, for decoration with pictures and casts is furnished for the most part by private aid, and the furnishing with apparatus which almost every city and country school needs is largely a question of whether the citizens are willing to be taxed extra to provide these things.

Therefore it is worth while to have a committee looking into these subjects. To this committee would fall the pleasant duty of making flower gardens for the windows, which will give an air of refinement and make the long hours pass less tediously ; and if, unhappily, there are

sunless rooms (as there certainly should not be in a village), the window gardens may be supplemented by an aquarium, which is always an interesting and instructive bit of life, especially to the smaller children. Suggestions for making an aquarium will be found in Teachers' Leaflet No. 11, by Mary F. Rogers, published by the College of Agriculture of Cornell University.

Do not forget that in the matter of schoolroom decoration good taste and clear thought go further than a long purse. The committee's goal must be quality, not quantity; its question, not how much clay and paint for its money, but how much loveliness. The school committee may be induced to paint the walls, and public-spirited citizens may agree to furnish the permanent decorations, such as pictures, casts, and vases.

Seventy cities and towns in Massachu-

setts have spent $20,000 in five years for works of art, yet none of the money came from public funds. It was all raised through the activity of teachers and education associations and by means of entertainments given by the children. Sometimes an old citizen will give money for the furnishing or decoration of a school in which he has been a pupil.

It requires about $100 a room to secure pictures and casts of permanent value, but it is better to be five years in completing the school than to make any mistakes. The fundamental principle should be no crowding, no confusion, no clutter; everywhere order, peace, and beauty.

To our committee on school administration, made up of teachers and school board members, with the superintendent of schools as chairman, we give, as I have already suggested, the reforms *within* the

schools; as reducing the number of pupils in charge of one teacher, giving her a chance to discover and encourage individual aptitudes, and all other needed reforms. We simply ask them (to start the ball rolling) whether there is not something better for the child than a system in which everybody must take the same course in the same length of time, in the same way, and be worried at the same intervals over the same arbitrary and formal tests, and finally waste the same number of precious years in the same weary and monotonous drudgery on the same subjects, too many of which have long since ceased to interest them.

An outlook committee is a useful adjunct to an education association, its function being to report from time to time the new, interesting, useful, and successful school experiments under trial in other

villages, cities, states, or countries. This committee should also bring to the general association the practical or practicable results of the deliberations and papers of the National Education Association, and should also report upon the subjects presented in the reports and bulletins of the National Bureau of Education, — information as to what other education associations are doing, what foreign educators are doing, etc.

For the moment I will transform myself into an outlook committee, and report on an interesting experiment now being tried in the little village of Hyannis, Mass., under the direction of the principal of the local Normal School.

In connection with the course in the Model School, which forms a part of the Normal School, it was determined last spring that one of the classes should, in place of manual training work, take charge

of a school garden. A section of the campus about one hundred feet by fifty feet was fertilized, ploughed, and harrowed. This land was then turned over to the boys and girls, under the direction of their teachers.

While the land was being prepared for gardening, the boys and girls gained some valuable experience in sending carefully written letters to various seedmen. They also gained some practical knowledge of mensuration by measuring and plotting the garden and setting apart various sections for different kinds of seeds.

When the weather was suitable the children began preparing the ground for planting, and on pleasant days worked in the garden about an hour each afternoon. Different kinds of seeds were planted in their seasons, some, like lettuce and sweet corn, being planted at different times.

Records were kept in books of the pur-

pose and time of planting, the time of coming up, and the various changes of growing plants. Plants were compared as to their relative rate and manner of growth. The first radishes were sold, and for these the boys and girls who tended the garden received their first check. This, with other checks and cash received from the sale of garden produce during the summer and fall, amounting in all to more than thirty dollars, was deposited in the local bank. All the boys and girls who had worked upon the garden went to the bank and learned exactly how to make a deposit, and to draw out money, and how to make and use all necessary business forms.

In connection with their work, they also were taught to save the best seeds for the next year's planting, and had their attention directed to forms of fruit and seeds, and the relation of plants to certain forms of animal life, such as the larvæ on the

tomatoes and turnips. They also became very observant of weather conditions.

This work proved so attractive that they were glad to spend an extra hour of each pleasant afternoon in working out of doors.

Among other forms of industrial work carried on in this Model School, with the assistance and coöperation of the homes, are sewing, weaving, carpentering, hammock-making, basket-making, and hat-making. The purchase of the raw material for these things was made with a portion of the money obtained from the sale of garden products. The hammocks, baskets, etc., are sold to summer visitors and others, and the children have thus grown in the sense of their own power to do something that has a commercial value. A large part of this work is conducted outside school hours as ordinarily understood, and apparently adds much to the interest of the boys and girls in all of their work.

One of the younger classes has been for some time at work upon a play house, which has been built by the pupils of the school and for which they are making furniture and household utensils in miniature. At the same time they are learning to contrast the modes of life in this country with the modes of life in other lands.

You village people are to be congratulated that your life and conditions, or what *may* be your conditions, are so much nearer *the ideal life* than are ours who live in cities. We have some advantages over you, but we have harder problems to solve; you have more advantages over us and fewer, if not easier, problems to solve; but be they many or few, difficult or easy, you will solve them in due time if you faint not, and your village will become more distinctly conscious of a community life, and the truth will grow

on you that the welfare of all is the concern of each.

It is Tennyson's bold declaration that if he could understand the little flower in the crannied wall, roots and all, he should know what God and man is; and if you can find out what one small township or village is, all in all, your microcosm will reveal to you all sociologies and all philosophies.

A village is not a little place, — the smallest hamlet has paths that lead to every corner of the world. The most obscure town is a visible image of the Kingdom of God, and its life need not be mean and dull. The study of a country community shall be our study of the universe.

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